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SUBJECT: A/DAS WYCOFF'S FEBRUARY 5 CONSULTATIONS IN PARIS:
CHAD, GREAT LAKES, SOMALIA

Classified By: Political Counselor Andrew Young, 1.4 (b/d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: During February 5 meetings with AF Acting DAS Karl Wycoff, French officials:

-- (on Chad) expressed skepticism about a role for the Francophonie organization in Chad; wanted "free and fair" elections yet seemed ready to welcome Deby's remaining in power as the best alternative;

-- (on the Great Lakes) provided background on Sarkozy's Great Lakes "plan," which sought to streamline and unify hitherto disparate international efforts in the region, build confidence between the two sides, and profit from the favorable current situation; explained that one element of the plan -- a joint venture between the DRC and Rwanda to exploit natural resources -- was dropped after strong criticism emerged in the region; provided a paper describing the plan and invited USG comments and reaction;

-- (on Somalia) welcomed the election of Somalia's new president but noted the absence of a "real government" in Somalia; acknowledged the need for improvements in Somalia's security sector with respect to both the military and police, but refrained from making commitments to contributing in that area, save for possible small-scale support for the police.
END SUMMARY.

12. (U) AF Acting DAS Karl Wycoff on February 5 met, separately, with MFA DAS-equivalent Christine Fages, Presidential AF Advisor Romain Serman, and MFA DAS-equivalent Helene Le Gal. Fages's deputy Laurent Bigot and MFA Chad desk officer Vincent Alexandre attended the meeting with Fages. Discussion focused on Chad (Fages and Serman), Great Lakes (Serman and Le Gal), and Somalia (Le Gal). These meetings preceded the February 6 Great Lakes Contact Group meeting that Wycoff attended.

Meeting with MFA DAS Fages: Chad

13. (C) Wycoff noted the USG's increased interest in Chad and asked about indications that the Francophonie organization was looking to become involved in Chad. Fages expressed skepticism about creating another mechanism or forum for addressing Chad's problems, particularly one that would require significant time to organize and to identify a role. She commented on the Chadian rebels' dependence on Sudan, which was now limiting the rebels' freedom of action. Alexandre said that the rebels remained divided, despite the claim that Timane Erdimi now represented a united rebel front. which Wycoff said paralleled USG assessments. The Sudanese, as well as Erdimi, hoped to exploit Zaghawa tribal/clan dynamics to their advantage to weaken Deby, which affected Deby's willingness to support the JEM.

14. (C) Fages expressed cautious support for the Dakar process, which she favored over any new involvement by the Francophonie organization. Dakar had "started well but seemed to be stalling," she observed. Fages hoped that the process would produce at least an agreement on military observers to monitor the border, if not joint military patrolling of the frontier regions by both Chad and Sudan. Fages believed that if Sudan proposed such patrolling, Deby would have difficulty refusing. The issuance of the ICC's indictment against Bashir could also serve as a trigger, leading either to efforts to cooperate or to renewed fighting initiated by Chad.

15. (C) Wycoff noted USG support for building civil society in Chad for technical assistance for Chad's electoral process. Fages said that France's priority was that the elections be carried out freely and fairly enough that they would produce a "legitimate" winner. She expected that Deby would emerge the winner, if for no other reason than the fact that he would likely refuse to hold the elections if he was not certain of victory. Wycoff demurred, questioning whether such elections could be "free and fair" and opining that Deby would remain true to his form and with limited legitimacy even if "elected." Fages reiterated that France wanted free and fair elections and would recognize whoever might win, even if not Deby. "It is important to have a legitimate president, whoever that may be." She nonetheless believed that Deby would prevail, given his ability to control the process. She remarked that there was no real alternative to Deby, however many shortcomings he had.

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16. (C) Fages said that France would support Deby if necessary in response to a rebel attack. When asked what France would do if Deby declared himself the winner of elections that were clearly not "free and fair," Fages said that that would have to be determined at levels within the GOF far above her grade. Wycoff said that the USG shared the GOF's view of the importance of holding "free and fair" elections but again expressed reservations about the GOF's readiness to accept a Deby victory, even if it was tainted. (COMMENT: Fages engaged in a number of verbal gymnastics in trying to square France's "free and fair" policy with her expectation -- if not desire -- that Deby win the elections and gain legitimacy thereby. The French have long insisted on the lack of alternative to Deby, and Fages did her best to make that case again. END COMMENT.)

17. (C) Wycoff and Fages discussed shared USG and GOF interest in assisting Chad's management of its oil resources and the World Bank's decision to amend certain of its agreements with Chad. They expressed concern about the weak state of the political parties and civil society and agreed on the need to assist developments in this area. The new Prime Minister, they agreed, had a more realistic understanding of Chad's situation and its leadership issues. Fages noted the relatively small role southern Chadians played in Chad's politics and how the south often lost out to the north. She acknowledged the possibility that the south would become more politically active and threaten the hold northerners had on Chad's governance.

Meeting with Presidential Advisor Serman:
Great Lakes, Chad

18. (C) Wycoff's meeting with Presidential AF Advisor Romain Serman centered on the Great Lakes, and the so-called Sarkozy Plan for the region. This plan was first mentioned in Sarkozy's January 16 New Year's speech to the diplomatic corps. The speech registered among Great Lakes watchers but was partially obscured by Nkunda's arrest and the sudden DRC/Rwanda cooperation to go after the FDLR and CNDP.

¶9. (U) In the speech, Sarkozy stated the following (informal Embassy translation):

-- As for the Great Lakes region, violence has once again been unleashed. The military option will not bring any solutions to the fundamental problems that have reappeared in a recurrent fashion for more than 10 years.

-- We must find a new approach to bring to the region's countries an assurance that the cluster of questions will be resolved in a global manner. This calls into question the place and the question of the future of Rwanda, with which France has resumed its dialogue, a country with a dynamic demography and a small surface area. This raises the question of the DRC, a country with a huge surface area and a strange organization of its border riches. It will be necessary, at one moment or another, that there be a dialogue that will not be simply a conjunctural dialogue but also a structural one: how, in this region of the world, one can share the space, share the riches, and accept the idea that geography has its own laws, that countries rarely change addresses, and that one must learn to live alongside others?

¶10. (C) An article on this "plan" appeared in Le Monde on January 17, stating that Sarkozy was preparing a "peace initiative for the eastern DRC and Rwanda. Serman told Wycoff that he was the source of the background material that formed the basis of Natalie Nougayrede's article.

¶11. (C) Before turning to Sarkozy's plan, Wycoff and Serman discussed Nkunda's arrest and DRC/Rwanda cooperation to move against the FDLR and CNDP. Wycoff noted USG efforts to promote bold, creative and flexible solutions to the conflict, which included dispatch of a Military Intelligence Support Team (MIST) to conduct psychological operations as a non-lethal means to neutralize the FDLR. Wycoff said that recent developments were conducive to moving forward on a political process that involved both countries as well as concerned parties such as the U.S. and EU. Serman said that Kagame was aware that significant new civilian casualties would be a "disaster" for him. Serman speculated that Rwanda would seek to withdraw quickly from the DRC, and said that Rwandan intelligence chief Emmanuel Ndahiro, who favored an

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early withdrawal, was visiting Paris. Wycoff said that Ndahiro was an excellent vehicle for communicating key points to Rwanda.

12 (C) Serman said that the Presidency had been working on a plan for the region since November, based on several factors. First, Serman said that the international community had never been "serious" about resolving the Great Lakes' problems. Efforts were fragmented and uncoordinated. It was necessary to find a common unified approach. Serman stressed the importance of looking ahead in addition to focusing on current problems. What should our approach be after the current effort to neutralize the FDLR and CNDP? We should all speak with Kabila and Kagame to assess their needs. Serman noted that France maintained a private channel of communications with Kigali, despite the rupture in relations caused by the legal cases relating to the 1994 genocide.

¶13. (C) Sarkozy would visit Kinshasa on March 26 (other stops being Brazzaville and Niamey) where he would discuss his ideas. Serman said the emphasis would be on trust- and confidence-building. Serman hoped that Rwanda would have withdrawn from the DRC by the time of the visit. Sarkozy would encourage more active leadership on Kabila's part. Serman said Sarkozy's plan favored smaller and more focused meetings and conferences on the region, rather than the current profusion. Current development projects tended to be too ambitious; smaller projects that would have a more immediate and tangible impact were preferable. Serman was skeptical about reviving the moribund CEPGL (Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries) -- "Has it worked?

Can't we do better?"

¶14. (C) Serman conceded that one idea -- setting up a joint venture that would exploit mineral resources in the DRC/Rwanda border areas -- was shot down quickly. This element of the Sarkozy draft speech received fierce criticism and Serman said that the French were dropping it from the plan. He noted that the MFA had issued several statements stressing the need to respect the sovereignty of all nations involved. Still, Serman said that some mechanism had to be developed to encourage cooperation on trade issues, for example, expedited transport regimes so that resources in the DRC could be transported out of the region through Rwanda, if that was the most effective way to effect transportation.

¶15. (C) The French plan would take into account the need to develop infrastructure, water and energy resources, food security, and environmental protection, although Serman said that the latter issue, for example, should not trump other issues ("protecting the monkeys shouldn't be our main concern"). There was also Rwanda's rapidly growing population to consider -- soon there could be 20 million people in the small country. The message, he said, was that if both sides pursued peace, "we can help you."

¶16. (C) Serman provided a paper on the Sarkozy plan, which we have sent to Embassies Kigali and Kinshasa and to AF/C. He welcomed any reaction the U.S. might have to his ideas.

¶17. (C) Wycoff noted that there were a variety of efforts underway to facilitate expanded regional cooperation, including the USG's Tripartite Plus process, whose members had recently agreed to establish a working group on expanding collaborative efforts to convert illegal economic activity into legal channels. He also stressed the U.S. desire to work with France and the EU across the board in the region. He noted USG SSR and military training programs in the DRC that could be synchronized with EU and French efforts. Other possible actors in this realm included South Africa, Angola, and the PRC. The U.S. was looking at hosting talks on SSR. The USG was working to help change the region from a war psychology to a development psychology, using a variety of tools. Serman encouraged the U.S., better placed than France, to increase its outreach to Rwanda.

¶18. (C) CHAD: In a brief exchange on Chad, Serman echoed Fages to the extent that there seemed no better alternative to Deby. Serman acknowledged Deby's shortcomings but cautioned that other would-be leaders were likely no better and probably much worse. He credited Deby -- "he listens, he does what he can, he keeps his promises." Serman said that France "pressured" Deby on democracy and good governance issues and on adhering to the August 2007 process. Progress was slow and Chad was "fragile," full of ethnic and clan intrigue, all complicated by Sudan's unhelpful machinations.

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Meeting with MFA DAS Le Gal:
Great Lakes, Somalia

¶19. (C) Reviewing many of the same issues raised with Serman, Le Gal commented favorably on recent events in the Great Lakes region that should be exploited. Wycoff reviewed U.S. engagement, noting that the USG had advocated bold, flexible, and creative approaches to expanding cooperation between Rwanda and the DRC and planned to continue to support their bilateral cooperation. Le Gal commented on complications resulting from legal actions in the region -- the recent conviction of FDLR-connected General Bizimungu by a gacaca court for acts committed in 1994, and still-pending ICC indictment of Bosco Ntaganda, Nkunda's former chief of staff who eventually helped oust Nkunda. Although not commenting directly on the Sarkozy Plan, Le Gal reiterated the need to coordinate our actions in the region and was

receptive to Wycoff's suggestions about ways future cooperation could expand or move beyond existing processes.

¶20. (C) SOMALIA: On Somalia, Le Gal welcomed the recent presidential election but lamented the lack of a "real government" there. She said that al-Shabaab was "not as strong as we feared," especially with Ethiopia's departure from Somalia, Ethiopia's presence having been al-Shabaab's raison d'etre. Le Gal said that it might be possible to marginalize al-Shabaab. She noted the need to strengthen Somalia's police and security forces but refrained, despite Wycoff's encouragement, from committing to a French contribution; Wycoff explained that, for the USG, the new government should be seen as an opportunity to expand the international community's efforts in Somalia, noting the USD 5 million set aside to support Somalia's security forces. If anything, Le Gal said that France would concentrate on the police but she said that this could only be done on a very small scale. Le Gal was also wary of the "gold plated" PKO that UNDPKO seemed to be offering as a possibility for Somalia, which seemed unreasonable given the much more modest costs of MINURCAT in Chad/C.A.R. Again, Le Gal repeated the scarcity of French resources, noting that France had offered in-kind transportation services for AMISOM participants Burundi and Botswana.

¶21. (U) Acting DAS Wycoff has cleared this message.

PEKALA